United Nations A/63/163

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 July 2008
English
Original: French

Sixty-third session
Item 92 (h) of the provisional agenda*
Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains an account of the activities undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to implement its mandate during the period from July 2007 to June 2008.

The activities undertaken during the reporting period reflect the ongoing revitalization of the Centre and the start of its stabilization, aimed at ensuring its effective functioning over the long term. The General Assembly's decision to fund the Centre's operation from the regular budget of the United Nations and to establish three posts marked a turning point for the Centre. The Centre launched new projects that meet both the requirements of States and the expectations of donors, while also continuing with its existing projects in the fields of security sector reform and practical disarmament. It also confirmed the importance of its activities in providing assistance, support and advice to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. At their meetings in Yaoundé and Luanda, the ministers of the 11 Central African countries members of the Committee reiterated the Committee's importance as a forum for consultation and negotiation, referring in particular to the projects under way to draft a legally binding instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and a code of conduct for armed and security forces in the Central African subregion, known as the "Sao Tome Initiative".

* A/63/150.

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The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to the States Members of the General Assembly that have supported the revitalization of the Centre and solved the persistent problem of its precarious financial situation by adopting a resolution that provides for both its operating costs and the creation of three posts to be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. He also thanks donors for their voluntary contributions, without which the Centre would not be able to undertake projects or fulfil its mandate vis-à-vis African States.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/216, by which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the necessary support to the Regional Centre for better achievements and results; to facilitate close cooperation between the Centre and the African Union, in particular in the areas of peace, security and development, and to continue to provide assistance towards stabilizing the financial situation of the Centre; and to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The report covers the period from July 2007 to June 2008. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the biennium 2006-2007 is contained in the annex.

II. Functioning of the Centre

3. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was established in 1986 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/151 G. Located in Lomé, the Centre functions within the framework of the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, which ensures its supervision and acts as the focal point for coordinating the input of the pertinent organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system.

4. During the reporting period, the post of the Director (P-5) continued to be funded through the regular budget of the United Nations. All activities of the Centre, as well as its operating costs in 2007, were funded solely through voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors. Starting in 2008, however, funding for a Political Affairs Officer (P-3) post and two General Service posts will be available from the regular budget of the United Nations, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/216.

5. The Centre implemented its programme of work in the following main areas: peace and security; disarmament and arms control; outreach and information; and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other entities.

III. Objectives and activities of the Centre

6. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/151 G, the Regional Centre is mandated to provide, upon request, and in cooperation with the African Union, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of the Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, as well as to coordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa.

7. During the reporting period, the Centre carried out activities in the four areas mentioned in paragraph 5 above.

A. Peace and security

8. During the reporting period, the Centre continued to implement the project entitled "African security sector reform programme: the promotion of civil-military relations in Togo", with funding provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and France. This pilot project aims to improve the relationship between the military and civilians — by promoting better dialogue and building knowledge and capacity among the armed and security forces with regard to the legal framework for their operations — in order to strengthen security and stability in the country.

9. As part of the pilot project, the Centre worked closely with the Togolese Inter-ministerial Commission on Civil-Military Relations, the United Nations country team in Togo and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It organized various retreats for young political leaders and media representatives. As a result, in October 2007, the young political leaders created an association called the "Permanent Observatory of Young Political Leaders for Non-Violence and Peace in Togo", with technical support from the Centre. The Centre also prepared and distributed a practical guide for the security forces on the maintenance of law and order during elections, which was formally presented to the Togolese Government on 21 September 2007, the International Day of Peace. While some copies have already been provided to the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the guide is intended to be published and distributed more widely, for which purpose the Centre is seeking technical and financial support. Lastly, the Centre held a training workshop for the Togolese armed forces on the legal framework for army operations in a democratic context. The opening and closing ceremonies were attended by the Togolese Prime Minister and general officers of the Togolese armed forces. Over 40 senior officers from various branches of the Togolese armed forces took part in the workshop. The General Staff of the Togolese armed forces asked for training to be decentralized and delivered annually so that members of regiments that had been unable to attend the March 2008 workshop could receive locally based training. The Centre is exploring options for replicating the project in other countries and is seeking funding for that purpose.

10. The Centre also continued and completed the project entitled "Capacity-building on practical disarmament and peacebuilding: strengthening grass-roots and civil society organizations", which ran from February 2007 to February 2008 and was funded by Oxfam (Great Britain).

11. In the framework of that project, the Centre created a database of civil society organizations in West Africa that are involved in peacebuilding and efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials. It also held a subregional workshop in Lomé in November 2007 to provide those organizations with modern tools, techniques and technical skills to enable them to contribute actively and more effectively to the strengthening of peace, security and stability in the subregion. Lastly, the Centre developed and distributed a curriculum and training manual for trainers with the aim of building the capacity of grass-roots and civil society organizations in practical disarmament and peacebuilding in West Africa. Given the success of this project and its substantive contribution to the advancement of efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms, the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) asked the Centre to organize similar training programmes on a smaller scale, in close

cooperation with the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms. Discussions are also under way on extending and adapting the project for capacity-building on practical disarmament and peacebuilding (see para. 10 above) to other African subregions.

12. In 2007, the Centre was entrusted with the task of serving as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa; in this capacity it organized the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, held in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007, and the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, held in Luanda from 13 to 15 May 2008. The objective of the Committee is to promote peace and security in the subregion through confidence-building measures, including arms limitation and disarmament. It is composed of the following 11 States: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

13. At the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh ministerial meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee, the Centre made presentations on various disarmament issues concerning the subregion. The Committee also considered and made recommendations regarding the political and security situation in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as making recommendations for the improvement of cross-border relations. Lastly, the implementation status of the two components of the Sao Tome Initiative (the drafting of a subregional legal instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons and of a code of conduct for armed and security forces in the Central African subregion) was discussed. More specifically, the Committee considered the draft code of conduct, prepared and presented by the Centre, and undertook to provide written comments with a view to finalizing and adopting the code at the next ministerial meeting, scheduled to be held in Libreville in September 2008. With regard to the legal instrument, the Standing Advisory Committee noted with satisfaction the presentation of the study commissioned by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), as part of its partnership with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, on the methodology that should be considered in order to develop and adopt the legal instrument and its plan of action. The Committee welcomed the important advances made in developing the instrument and encouraged its secretariat to provide it with a draft text containing elements drawn from relevant legal instruments. Lastly, the Committee resolved to continue to streamline its activities and decided that a working paper on its origins, mandate, achievements and future prospects should be considered at the Libreville ministerial meeting.

B. Disarmament and arms control

Weapons of mass destruction

14. The Centre provided support for the second African seminar on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), held in Gaborone on 27 and 28 November 2007. Organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Botswana, this workshop received financial support from the Andorran and Norwegian Governments and was attended by participants from 16 African countries that had not taken part in the 2006 Accra

seminar. Representatives of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Customs Organization also participated in the event. The workshop gave States the opportunity to share knowledge and lessons learned in order to facilitate effective implementation of Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1673 (2006). Particular attention was also given to requests for assistance from States and to identifying problems associated with implementation of the resolution, including in relation to the first national reports to be submitted by the States.

Small arms and light weapons control

15. As part of the annual observance of Disarmament Week, the Centre organized, in cooperation with Togo's national commission to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms, a ceremony for the destruction of illicit weapons and ammunition on 31 October 2007. The ceremony was followed by a panel discussion for civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic corps, senior officers of Togo's military and security forces and student researchers on the topic "Arms and conflicts in Africa".

16. At the request of ECOWAS, the Centre took part in the consultations held by the ECOWAS Small Arms Unit on the preparation of a plan for the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition, and Other Related Materials, adopted in June 2006. A meeting of experts will be held to review and finalize the plan prior to its actual implementation.

17. The Centre participated as a member in the meetings of the ECOSAP Technical Committee, which considers and approves all project proposals submitted to the Programme by national commissions and civil society organizations. The Centre also provided technical support for the implementation in Togo of a subregional ECOSAP project launched in 2007, which comprises the following elements: raising public awareness of the dangers of small arms and light weapons, building the capacity of national commission members in the areas of arms registration and stockpile security, and conducting a survey on the circulation and impact of small arms and light weapons in Togo.

18. In November 2007 the Centre participated in an expert workshop in Bamako organized by ECOSAP for the purpose of finalizing and approving its advocacy and communication strategy paper for combating small arms in West Africa. On that occasion the Centre shared its experience and expertise in awareness-raising and communication on the problem of small arms in West Africa.

19. The Centre continued to maintain and operate a small arms register for Africa to promote confidence-building measures and transparency in arms transfers between the countries participating in the Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa project. It began work on expanding the register to include information on small arms and light weapons brokering. The Centre received financial support from the Austrian Government for the implementation of its project "Regulating small arms brokering in Africa". The project, which is currently in the preparatory phase, is intended to promote the regulation of arms brokers in Africa to prevent illegal activity. It will result in the creation and publication of an inventory of arms brokers, the compilation of administrative and legislative

measures relating to brokering activities and the establishment of a database and a regional register of arms brokers in the 10 target countries.

20. The Centre provided logistical and technical support for the organization of two subregional workshops on the International Tracing Instrument for small arms and light weapons. The first workshop, held in Nairobi on 10 and 11 December 2007 and funded by the Governments of Kenya, Norway and the Czech Republic and by the European Union, was for the States of East Africa, the Great Lakes region and southern Africa. The second workshop, held in Lomé on 17 and 18 April 2008 and funded by the Governments of Norway and Japan and by the European Union, was for the States of West and Central Africa. The workshops gave the participants a better understanding of the obligations set out in the Instrument and the procedures for obtaining technical assistance and individual training opportunities for acquiring practical know-how.

21. In addition, the Centre provided technical support for the regional seminars held on 21 and 22 April 2008 and on 24 and 25 April 2008 in Lomé by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Togo and with funding from the European Union. The seminars were intended to promote universal adherence to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons[1] and its protocols. Participants from West and East African countries attended the first seminar, while participants from countries of the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and southern Africa attended the second seminar. At both seminars, participants gained a better understanding of why it was in States' interest to become parties to the Convention and discussed the obligations set out in the Convention, the challenges of implementing it and assistance opportunities. These workshops also gave the Regional Centre an opportunity to establish a network of national focal points on these issues to follow up on the discussions generated by the presentations.

C. Outreach and information

22. During the period under review the Centre focused its outreach and information efforts on its Internet portal. It also organized a number of activities in Togo.

23. The Centre reconfigured its website (www.unrec.org), particularly in terms of its presentation and structure, which combine impact with flexibility and ease of use. The key component of the new site is a freely accessible database containing various types of information on peace, security and disarmament in Africa. It offers constantly updated information on events and new trends with respect to the problem of disarmament in Africa. Also in this period the Centre set up an electronic newsletter system whereby it regularly e-mails to interested parties information on its activities and on current developments in the areas of peace, security, disarmament and related issues in Africa.

24. The Centre also organized a number of youth forums in Togo with graduate and undergraduate students in order to discuss a range of issues, including the challenges of disarmament in Africa, armed conflict and international human rights law and the problem of child soldiers. The Centre also gave presentations and led

[1] Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

panel discussions in Togo, with the participation of civil society organizations, on how the lawless circulation of small arms adversely affects development in the countries of West Africa.

D. Cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other entities

25. Within the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and pursuant to the memorandum of understanding concluded in August 2007 by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the ECCAS secretariat, the Centre participated in the review of the feasibility study funded by ECCAS as part of the preparations for drafting a legally binding instrument for small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa.

26. In 2007 the Centre received funding from the Austrian Government for the implementation of its project "Support for ECOWAS in implementing practical disarmament measures in West Africa", of which the preparatory phase began in January 2008. This project is intended to build the operational capacity of the ECOWAS Small Arms Unit and the ECOSAP project. It will include the review and harmonization of national laws on small arms and light weapons in the West African subregion. It will also include a subregional training workshop to build the technical capacity of members of national commissions. Lastly, it will involve the establishment of a database and a subregional register on small arms and light weapons and on peacekeeping operations in which the States members of ECOWAS are participating.

27. In addition, the Centre supported the process of approving the strategic plan of action of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for 2007-2017. In that connection, the Centre participated in the meeting of strategic partners organized by the Network on 17 and 18 December 2007 in Accra.

28. From 9 to 11 October 2007 the Centre cooperated with the African Security Sector Network and the Centre for Policy Research and Dialogue in organizing an international workshop on an African strategy for security sector reform, held at African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. At the workshop the Centre shared its expertise in democratic governance of the security sector, which it acquired through the pilot programme it has been carrying out in Togo since February 2007.

IV. Operational situation of the Centre

A. Financial situation

29. During the period under review the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa received voluntary contributions totalling $915,533[2] for the execution of new projects.

30. The Secretary-General is grateful to the Governments of Austria and Turkey and to Oxfam (Great Britain) for their financial contributions and their support for

[2] In 2007 the Trust Fund received contributions from the following donors: Austria ($773,906), Turkey ($20,000) and Oxfam (Great Britain) ($121,627).

the Centre's activities. He also thanks the Government of Togo, the host country. He hopes that the financial support pledged by the Government of Togo at the General Assembly's sixty-first session will be disbursed to the Centre as soon as possible. The annex to this report contains information on the situation of the Trust Fund for the Centre for the period 2006-2007.

31. An amount of $16,600 from the United Nations regular budget was disbursed to the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2007 to fund upgrades at the Centre to meet health, safety and security standards. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/216, an amount of $42,900 from the United Nations regular budget was disbursed in 2008 to help defray the Centre's operating costs.

32. Despite the decision taken in Khartoum in January 2006 by the Executive Council of the African Union (EX.CL/243 (VIII) Add.7), in which the Council called upon member States to make voluntary contributions to the Centre to maintain its operations, no funds have been received to date.

B. Staffing

33. During the reporting period, owing to the receipt of some funds earmarked for project-related activities, the Centre was able to recruit a number of staff to assist in the execution of those activities. They include four fixed-term staff members and three project coordinators, two associate project coordinators, one information technology assistant and one short-term local consultant. The Centre also continued to benefit from the assistance of interns in research and project-support tasks. In addition, a recruitment process has begun for a Political Affairs Officer (P-3) post and two General Service posts, which will be funded from the United Nations regular budget pursuant to resolution 62/216. Lastly, a recruitment process has begun for an Associate Expert post funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

V. Conclusion

34. During the period under review the Centre undertook new initiatives and projects in the fields of security sector reform and practical disarmament measures for which specific funding had been provided.

35. The Secretary-General is grateful to the General Assembly for its decision to fund the Centre's operating costs and three new posts from the regular budget of the Organization, which will make it possible to implement the recommendations of the Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. He calls upon all countries in a position to do so, especially the States of the region, to contribute more actively to the Centre's disarmament projects through voluntary contributions. The resulting increase in the Centre's human and operational capacity will enable it to discharge its mandate in full and to respond more effectively to requests for assistance from African States.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the biennium 2006-2007[a]

	United States dollars
Fund balance, 31 December 2005	273 906
Income, 1 January 2006-31 December 2007	
Voluntary contributions[b]	1 123 990
Funds received under inter-organizational arrangements	224 367
Interest income	59 940
Other income	157 540
Subtotal	**1 839 743**
Expenditures, 1 January 2006-31 December 2007	714 770
Fund balance, 31 December 2007	**1 124 973**

[a] Information based on the statement of income and expenditure for the biennium 2006-2007 ending on 31 December 2007. In the period from 1 January to 30 June 2008, no contributions were received.

[b] 2006: Cameroon ($1,663), France ($100,593) and UNDP in Togo ($86,729).
2007: Austria ($773,906), Cameroon ($3,914), France ($102,287), Turkey ($20,000) and Oxfam (Great Britain) ($259,265).